Claims

We claim:

5   1. A method for use in a physical store in communicating a message to a customer who is carrying one or more items for purchase, the method comprising:

using electronic means, while the customer is moving through the store, to gather data identifying at least one of the items carried by the customer;

applying a computer-implemented program to analyze the data and identify at least

10   one alternative item that the customer might want to buy;

preparing a message about the alternative item; and

delivering the message to the customer while the customer is still in the store.

2. The method of claim 1, where using electronic means to gather data includes

15   receiving a signal that originates with a device that is attached to one of the items carried by the customer.

3. The method of claim 2, where using electronic means to gather data includes receiving a signal from an RFID tag attached to the item.

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4. The method of claim 1, where using electronic means to gather data includes receiving a signal from a transmitter located in a shopping basket that the customer is using to carry the items.

25   5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

obtaining data about previous purchases made by one or more customers of the store; and

providing this data to the computer-implemented program for use in analyzing the data gathered from the items carried by the customer.

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6. The method of claim 5, where obtaining data about previous purchases includes obtaining data about one or more previous purchases made by the customer to whom the message is being delivered.

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7. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

obtaining data about an inventory level of at least one item in the store; and

providing this data to the computer-implemented program for use in analyzing the data gathered from the items carried by the customer.

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8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

obtaining data about at least one of the following things: weather in the area in which the store is located; an upcoming holiday; fashion trends; a recipe; a shopping list made by the customer; a wish list made by the customer; a wish list made by someone for whom the customer is shopping; and

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providing this data to the computer-implemented program for use in analyzing the data gathered from the items carried by the customer.

9. A computer program, stored on a tangible storage medium, for use in a physical store in communicating a message to a customer who is carrying one or more items for

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purchase, the program comprising executable instructions that, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to:

receive, while the customer is moving through the store, data that identifies at least one of the items carried by the customer;

analyze the data and identify at least one alternative item that the customer might

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want to buy;

prepare a message about the alternative item; and

deliver the message to the customer while the customer is still in the store.

10. The program of claim 9, where, in receiving the data that identifies at least one of the items carried by the customer, the computer receives information derived from a signal that originates with a device that is attached to one of the items carried by the customer.

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11. The program of claim 10, where, in receiving the data, the computer receives information derived from a signal that originates with an RFID tag attached to the item.

12. The program of claim 9, where, in receiving the data that identifies at least one of the items carried by the customer, the computer receives information derived from a signal that originates with a transmitter located in a shopping basket that the customer is using to carry the items.

13. The program of claim 9, where the program also causes the computer to:

15   obtain data about previous purchases made by one or more customers of the store; and

use this data in analyzing the data gathered from the items carried by the customer.

14. The program of claim 13, where, in obtaining data about previous purchases,

20   the computer obtains data about one or more previous purchases made by the customer to whom the message is being delivered.

15. The program of claim 9, where the program also causes the computer to:

obtain data about an inventory level of at least one item in the store; and

25   use this data in analyzing the data gathered from the items carried by the customer.

16. The program of claim 9, where the program also causes the computer to:

obtain data about at least one of the following things: weather in the area in which the store is located; an upcoming holiday; fashion trends; a recipe; a shopping list made by the customer; a wish list made by the customer; a wish list made by someone for

5   whom the customer is shopping; and

use this data in analyzing the data gathered from the items carried by the customer.

17. A system for use in a physical store in communicating a message to a customer who is carrying one or more items for purchase, the system comprising:

10   a data-gathering device configured to gather, while the customer is moving through the store, data identifying at least one of the items carried by the customer;

a computer system configured to:

analyze the data and identify at least one alternative item that the customer might want to buy; and

15   prepare a message about the alternative item; and

a message-delivery device configured to deliver the message to the customer while the customer is still in the store.

18. The system of claim 17, where the data-gathering device includes a device

20   attached to one of the items carried by the customer.

19. The system of claim 18, where the device includes an RFID tag attached to one of the items.

25   20. The system of claim 17, where the data-gathering device includes transmitter that delivers information to the computer system.

21. The system of claim 20, where the transmitter is located in a shopping basket that the customer is using to carry the items.

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22. The system of claim 17, where the message-delivery device includes a display monitor.

23. The system of claim 22, where the display monitor is mounted to a shopping basket that the customer is using to carry the items.

24. The system of claim 22, where the display monitor includes an input mechanism that allows the customer to deliver input to the system.

25. The system of claim 17, where the computer system is configured to:
   obtain data about previous purchases made by one or more customers of the store; and
   use this data in analyzing the data gathered from the items carried by the customer.

26. The system of claim 25, where, in obtaining data about previous purchases, the computer system is configured to obtain data about one or more previous purchases made by the customer to whom the message is being delivered.

27. The system of claim 17, where the computer system is also configured to:
   obtain data about an inventory level of at least one item in the store; and
   use this data in analyzing the data gathered from the items carried by the customer.

28. The program of claim 17, where the computer system is also configured to:
   obtain data about at least one of the following things: weather in the area in which the store is located; an upcoming holiday; fashion trends; a recipe; a shopping list made by the customer; a wish list made by the customer; a wish list made by someone for whom the customer is shopping; and
   use this data in analyzing the data gathered from the items carried by the customer.